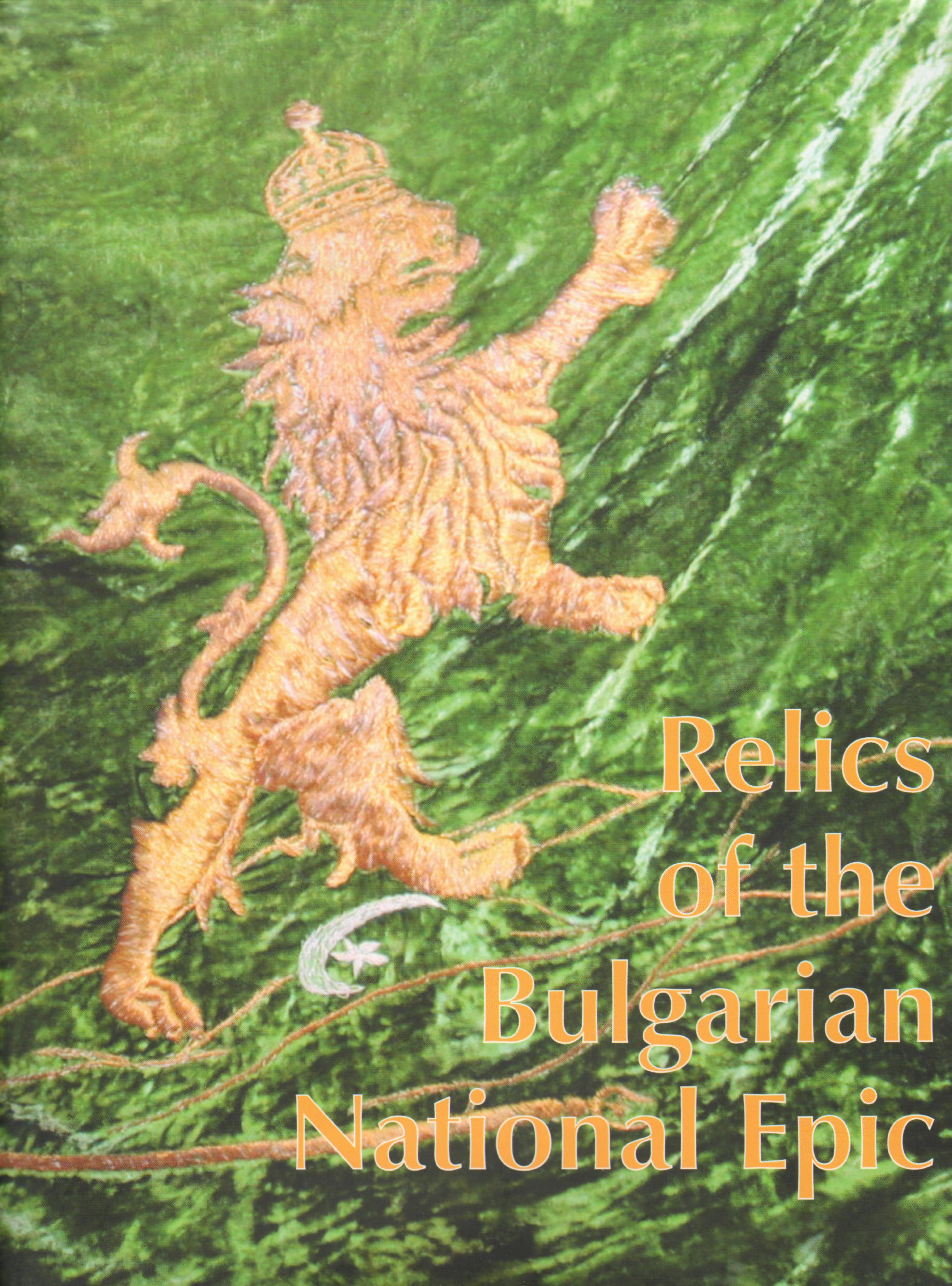




Relics
of the
Bulgarian
National Epic

PAISSII OF HILENDAR: FOUNDER OF THE NATIONAL IDEOLOGY

In modern historiography the first centuries of the Ottoman rule of Bulgarian lands are determined as Late Middle Ages. The time from the beginning of the 18th century to the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War is called Bulgarian National Revival. If the National Revival period for Northern Bulgaria and the Sofia Region continued by 1878, for Eastern Rumelia it was by 1885 and for Macedonia and Adrianople Thrace by 1912-1913.

The National Revival in the Bulgarian lands witnessed considerable economic progress. The Bulgarian were increasingly getting rid of their mediaeval restricted outlook and helplessness and were gradually getting aware as people, aspiring towards economic and cultural progress. Hilendar monk Paissii became a mouthpiece of these changes in the national self-awareness. He was the first to perceive the beginning of the new time and the need of formulating verbally the maturing historical prospects and tasks before the Bulgarian people.

Few facts are known about Paissii's life. Historians believe him to have been born in 1722 in the Samokov Eparchy, probably in Bansko. In 1745 he settled on Mount Athos and became a mendicant friar at the Hilendar Monastery. Like the other friars, he would tour villages and cities in the Bulgarian lands so as to collect aid for the monastery. Gradually, he came to know the slave destiny of the people and began to seek a way for its survival and rescue. Paissii was the first National Revival figure to arrive to the conclusion that in order to go out of the swamp of slavish irresolution and impersonality, the Bulgarian should re-discover his glorious past and thus restore his national dignity and faith in its potential of people with historical prospects. Owing to the tenacity, persistence, self-discipline and love towards his fellow countrymen, having sustained lot of privation and suffering, personal insult and scarcity, the Hilendar Monk began modestly but consistently performing his historic mission to awaken the Bulgarians. Paissi would work tirelessly in the libraries of the Athos monasteries. During his trips he would get familiarized with numerous facts of the material and spiritual culture of the Bulgarians of the past which is accompanied by a revival

of the respectful image of Mediaeval Bulgaria. In Sremski Karlovci, one of the most active literary centres of the time, Paissi read the book of Dubrovnik Abbot Mavro Orbini "The Realm of the Slavs" in which he discovered considerable evidence about the Bulgarians' past.

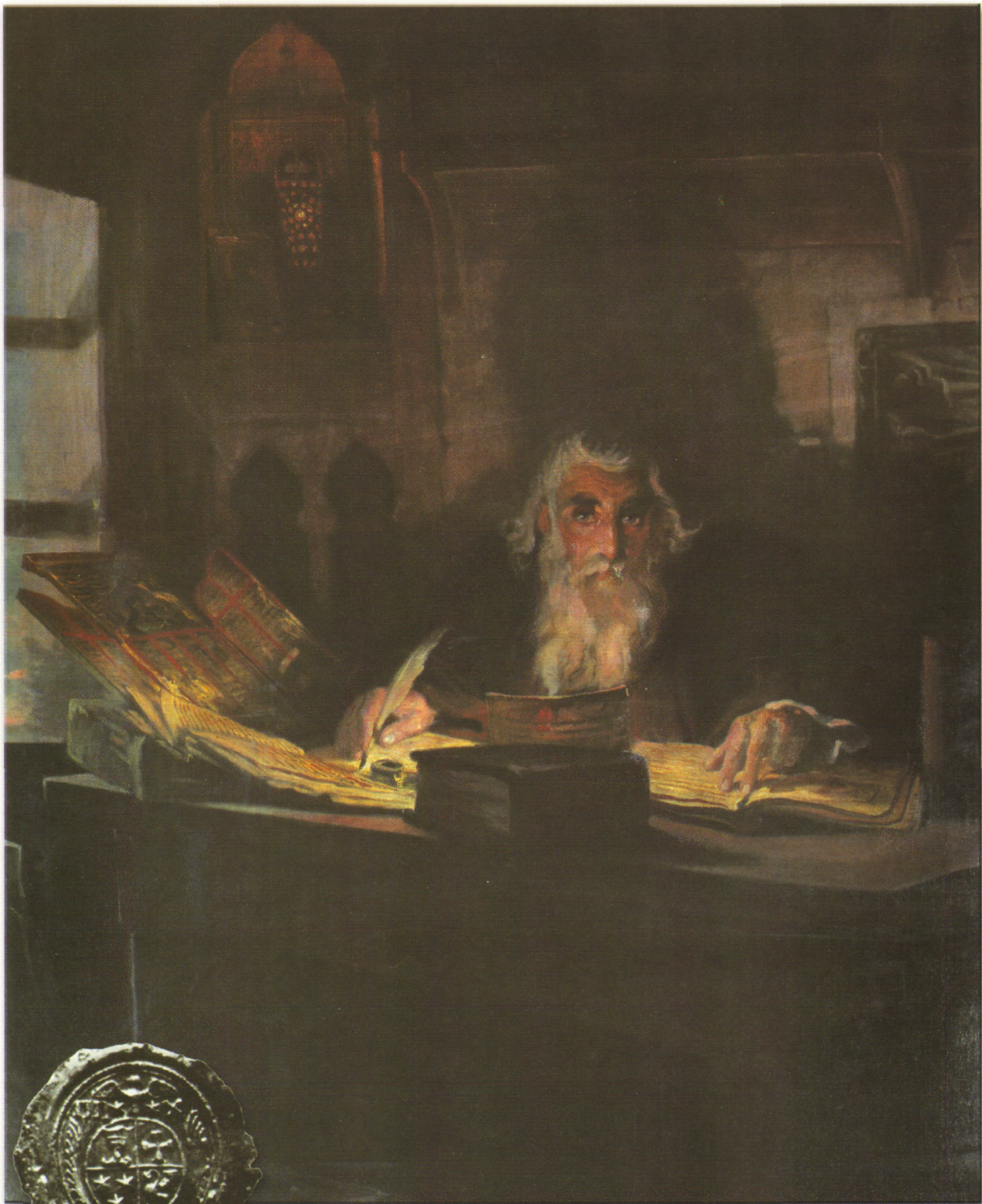
In 1762 he completed "Slav-Bulgarian History, about the People and the Kings, the Bulgarian Saints and All Bulgarian Activities and Events". In 83 hand-written pages the inspired Hilendar Monk interpreted using romantic and heightened tone the grandeur of Mediaeval Bulgaria, the victory of the Bulgarian army over Byzantium, the impressive bravery and manliness of the Bulgarians, the historic mission of the Cyril and Methodius brothers and other eloquent facts, worthy to be remembers and respected by the successors. Already in the forward this noted Bulgarian appealed with genuine sincerity towards his compatriots to love and keep their language, respect their Bulgarian name and be not ashamed of being Bulgarians. Paissii's narration was so emotional and inspiring that the readers and listeners could not remain impartial towards his convincing implications and appeals for a change. His message was related to a deeply patriotic goal: to revive the Bulgarians' spiritual energy, stimulate them regain their national grandeur and become aware of their efforts and potential for historic involvement and restoration of statehood. Paissii's book was not to be read in private or for amusement, It was an appeal for awakening and solidarity towards people, united by a common past, being a source of pride, and destined to live in the name of humane and fair ideals. In his book Paissii reveals himself as a competent historian and National Revival figure, ideologist of the historic need of national revival, spiritual awakening and lasting self-preservation of the Bulgarian nationality in its natural ethnic borders. The noted Bulgarian's efforts were successful which was evident of the fact that "Slav-Bulgarian History" was copied, edited, extended and updated many times in the following years of the National Revival period by his followers and awakeners of the Bulgarian spirit.

Father Paissii, Ivan Mrkvicka (National Art Gallery)

The personal seal of Paissii of Chilendar

The signature of Paissii of Chilendar placed under the Karlovatz document as of May 21, 1761

"Slav-Bulgarian History", Paissii of Hilendar



СТАВНА ПЪРВОТЪЛСНА
ХИЛАНДЪРСТЕН

„О, неразумний юроде!
Поради що се срамиш да се наречеш българин
и не четеш, и не говориш на своя език?
Или не са имали българите царство и държава?“

MOVEMENT FOR INDEPENDENT BULGARIAN CHURCH

The movement for new Bulgarian education and culture in the Bulgarian lands during the National Revival unfolded along with a large-scale fight for an independent church. This was one of the main characteristic features of the ethnic and cultural self-identification of the Bulgarians and a clear demonstration of the national self-confidence.

The need of an independent Bulgarian church was first expressed by Paissii of Hilendar, who recalled the past grandeur of the Turnovo Patriarchy in his "Slav-Bulgarian History". As time passed his ideas were accepted by representatives of all layers of the Bulgarian society during the National Revival period. Discontent from the Greek Phanariot clergymen was first revealed in Vratsa (1824), where corbaci Dimitraki Hadjitoshev was killed and bishop Metodi was replaced. Vratsa's example was followed by Skopje, Samokov, Stara Zagora and other towns in Mizia, Thrace and Macedonia.

The reforms prompted in the Ottoman Empire resulted in the emergence of the so-called Gylhan Decree (Hattisheriff, 1839 z.), which offers a possibility for the Bulgarians to abandon their "national anonymity". The new Greek state gave an inspiring example by setting an autocephalous church only in 1833. The 1838 protest of the Turnovo Eparchy against Greek Phanariote Panaret from Constantinople whose abuses, corruptness, intrigues and anti-Bulgarian feelings became intolerable set the beginning of the movement for independent Bulgarian church. The protest of the Turnovo inhabitants was joined by 16 regions: Svishtov, Rousse, Pleven, Vratsa, Gabrovo, Lovech, Razgrad, Sevlievo, Nikopol, Chirpan, Stara Zagora, etc.

The names of Neofit Bozveli and Ilarion Mihailovski (Makaripolski) stood out in the movement for church independence. As representatives of the people, they came up with a statement to the Ottoman Government containing the following demands: to appoint only Bulgarian prelates in Bulgarian lands and appoint bishops in accordance with people's will as they would have a strictly set salary; Bulgarians in Constantinople should have their own church and issue their own paper; and to open new Bulgarian schools. Although their demands were fair, the two Bulgarians were sent on an exile on Mount Athos, where Neofit Bozveli died. In his book "Mati Bulgaria" [Mother Bulgaria] he passionately urged his compatriots not to give up the fight for independent Bulgarian church. The temporary misfortunes of the movement for church independence did not stop its natural progress. In 1849 the Ottoman authorities gave a permit and the Bulgarians in Constantinople built their own church "St. Stephen" (the so-called Iron Church). The Sultan's decree mentions for the first time the Bulgarian people. Thus the Bulgarian congregation in

Constantinople became a unifying centre of the movement for independent Bulgarian church headed by Ilarion Mihailovski, who, back from exile, assumed the name, Bishop Makariopolski. The first Bulgarian paper in Constantinople ("Tsarigrdski Vestnik"), set up by Ivan Bogrov, also took credit for the efforts to unite the Bulgarians.

The second stage of the Bulgarians' struggle for independent church began after the Crimean War (1853 - 1856). In 1856 the issuing of the so-called Hatihumayun Decree confirmed the Sultan-promised rights for all subjects, including church reforms. The Constantinople Bulgarians insisted on prompt holding of elections for civil and church representatives that should help the inclusion of Bulgarians in the administration of the Ottoman Empire. Such demands were made in other parts of the Bulgarian lands as well: Turnovo, Silistra, Haskovo, Pirot, Vranja, Kukush, Veles, Skopje, etc. The Bulgarian emigrants in Russia, Vlachia and Moldova also declared themselves in support of the all-national movement.

The Patriarchy denied any compromise. During the solemn Easter Liturgy on 3 April 1860 in the "St. Stephen Church" Bishop Ilarion Makariopolski did not pronounce the Patriarch's name. According to the canons, this implied that the Bulgarians did not recognize the supremacy and independence of the Patriarchy. This demonstration went down in history as the "Bulgarian Easter" and the news about it spread quickly across the country. The Phanariots were expelled from a number of eparchies and Ilarion Makariopolski was recognized as supreme Bulgarian High Priest. Eventually, on February 28, 1870 (Saturday), the Grand Vezir of the Ottoman Empire, Ali Pasha, handed the Bulgarian representatives a decree recognizing their right to a church, independent from the Patriarchy. Article 10 of the decree set the territorial scope of the independent Bulgarian Exarchy, including the following eparchies: Rousse, Silistra, Shoumen, Turnovo, Sofia, Vratsa, Lovech, Vidin, Nis, Pirot, Kyustendil, Samokov, Veles, Sliven, Plovdiv, Varna and Sozopol.

A convention of church and laity was called in 1871 to adopt a Statute of the Exarchy. Antim I was elected the first Bulgarian Exarch on February 16, 1872.

The establishment of an independent Exarchy in Bulgaria was a result of the struggle of the whole nation. The Exarchy succeeded to unite the Bulgarian people in spiritual, political and religious terms. It was the first officially recognized national institution. It served as a pillar of the struggles for restoration of the Bulgarian state and achieving full political independence of the country.

¹ People who acted as middlemen between the state and the Bulgarian population.

GEORGI STOIKOV RAKOVSKI: FOUNDER OF THE ORGANIZED NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT OF THE BULGARIANS

Georgi Stoikov Rakovski was one of the most eminent figures in the epoch of the Bulgarian National Revival in the 19th century. The transition from sporadic political fights to organized national liberation movement is associated with his name and overall activity. He was born in the town of Kotel, a settlement of high national awareness and a native place of outspoken National Revival figures and fighters for Bulgaria's liberation.

Initially, Georgi Stoikov Rakovski studied in his hometown and then in Karlovo and Constantinople. The life of this eminent Bulgarian was filled with faith in the powers and abilities of the Bulgarian people. In the course of more than 25 years he led continuous fights for the awakening and organizing of the Bulgarians against the Ottoman rule and for the reinstatement of the Bulgarian state, after the example of the neighbouring peoples, Greek, Serbs and Romanians. For him "the love to the fatherland was above all good things in the world!" A follower of Paissii of Hilenadar, Sofronii of Vratsa and Neofit Bozveli, he revealed himself as prestigious and skillful organizer of his patriotically-minded compatriots from all sides of the Bulgarian lands. A publicist, a journalist, a historian, an ethnographer, a folk expert, a numismatist and a champion of modern education and school, for an independent Bulgarian church and, mostly, a tireless supporter of the idea of liberation of the Bulgarians using their own resources. The famous quote: "The Bulgarians lost their freedom in a fight and should regain it in a fight as well" belongs to him.

The periods were outlined in Rakovski's political activity: the first from 1841 to the 1853 - 1856 Crimean War and, the second one, after the war to his death in 1867. In the years by the Crimean War he organized rebels of the Bulgarian emigrants in Braila in 1841. After touring many places in his capacity as revolutionary, due to the valuable experience gathered, Rakovski arrived to his first plan for liberation of Bulgaria under which the Bulgarians' struggle for liberation should be organized by an appropriate popular organization. All layers of the Bulgarian National Revival society were expected to participate in it: the rich with their money, the educated and literate with their organizational skills and the rest with arms and immediate involvement in the upcoming uprising. According to Rakovski, it had to be coordinated with the liberation struggles of the other Balkan peoples and enlist the support of France and Russia so as to guarantee its success.

After the plan was ready, Rakovski reached an agreement with the Serb Government on the establishment of a volunteer combat formation of Bulgarians. Some 600

people responded to his appeal to set up the First Bulgarian Legion in the spring of 1861. It took part in the assault of the Belgrade Fortress and won the affection of Belgrade inhabitants with its heroism. There Vassil Ivanov Kounchev was given the historic name of Levski.

The settlement of the Serb-Turkish disputes through diplomatic channels foiled the plans of the inspired Bulgarian. Nevertheless, he continued his diverse activities of a committed public figure and began developing new plans on Bulgaria's liberation with even higher enthusiasm. In 1863 he visited Athens and then Montenegro with the purpose of enlisting the support of a higher number of allies for the Bulgarian cause. Eventually, he settled in Bucharest and sought new possibilities for cooperation with our northern neighbour. Having experienced a new disappointment by the end of his life, Rakovski arrived to the conviction that the Bulgarians should not count on external support but on its own forces for the liberation and reinstatement of their state.

On January 1, 1867 Rakovski published his most recent plan: Interim Law on National Forest Detachments in 1867. It was based on the idea of an all-national uprising, headed by a single supreme command. The core of its army was to be established on the territory of Romania and Serbia and enter Bulgaria in an appropriate moment to make the local people begin a mass fight against the oppressors.

The lack of funds was the reason for the failure of the plan to set up a numerous combat formation of detachments abroad. Nevertheless, the merits of G.S. Rakovski for political revival of the Bulgarians are exceptional. He was the first of the National Revival politicians to become aware of the connection between the Bulgaria problem and the big Eastern issue and that the historic moment had come to reinstate the Bulgarian state. With his concrete diplomatic activity and connections with neighbouring Balkan countries, he managed to unite their efforts against the Sublime Porte and, thus, to urge his fellow countrymen for higher commitment to the activities for the country's liberation. Rakovski managed to prepare a resolved new generation of revolutionaries that would continue his idea about liberation of Bulgaria.

Indeed, ten years after Rakovski's death, his followers fulfilled his dream: Bulgaria was liberated on March 3, 1878. Rakovski's life and deeds set even today an example of commitment to the interests of the fatherland and faithful love towards free and independent Bulgaria.

G.S. Rakovski with Detachment in the Balkan Range, A. Sako (NMMH)

An appeal for an uprising to the Bulgarian people by G.S. Rakovski bearing his signature, 1 August, 1862 (lithography, archives of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)

Rifle equipped with capsule ignition of G.S. Rakovski (NMMH)

Pistols equipped with flint ignition of G.S. Rakovski (NMMH)

The cover of the "Traveller in the Forest" poem, issued in Novi Sad, 1857 (NMMH)

ARMED DETACHMENT MOVEMENT IN THE 1860s

The fight of the Bulgarians for political liberation in the 1860s was related to the armed detachment movement. It confirmed the fact that regardless of the difficulties in organizing a solid combat formation abroad, the followers of G.S. Rakovski gathered courage and bravery to sacrifice their lives in the name of freedom, set an example for intolerance to the Ottoman rule for their compatriots and ensure political rights and freedoms for the Bulgarians.

After the dissolution of the Second Bulgarian Legion part of the revolutionaries decided to form a detachment that would enter Bulgarian lands and make the population revolt. With the financial assistance of the Benevolent Society two detachments - headed by Panayot Hitov and Filip Totyu - set up in Romania entered Bulgaria in 1867. Their goal was to boost the spirit of the Bulgarian population south of the Danube and check its readiness to revolt. Colour-bearer Vassil Levski, recommended by G.S. Rakovski, was also on the 30-strong detachment of P. Hitov. The detachment crossed the Danube at Tautrakan in late April 1867. After spending some time in the Sliven area of the Balkan Range and fulfilling the instructions of Benevolent Society Chairman Hristo Georgiev, the detachment withdrew westward, along the Balkan Range ridge, towards Serbia.

On May 17, 1867 the 35-strong detachment of Filip Totyu also entered Bulgaria. On their way from Svishtov to the Balkan Range, the detachment was detected and persecuted by the Turks. Tired, hungry and poorly armed, they were besieged at the village of Vurbovka, Sevlievo Region, and a large part of them died heroically in the fight. Voivode [leader] Filip Totyu and the 12 survivors managed to break the siege and after wandering for a long time reach the Balkan Range, where they joined the detachment of Panayot Hitov. Only four survived by the time they reached the Balkan Range.

In 1867 detachments of Bulgarian emigrants were set up in the town of Zaicar, Serbia, as well. One of them was that of Nikola Voivodov and Tsvyatko Pavlovic, who attempted to enter Bulgarian territory but were forced by the Serb authorities to disperse. Detachments were set up inside Bulgaria as well: in Tulcha Region and the Balkan Range but they existed for a short period of time.

Regardless of the misfortunes, the patriot-emigrants of the self-disbanded Second Bulgarian Legion organized a 127-strong detachment, headed by legendary voivodes Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadja. On July 6, 1868 the

detachment crossed the Danube at Svishtov, where the Turkish troops promptly opened fire against it. Half of its members died in bloody battles at the villages of Karaisen, Patresh and Vishovgrad (Turnovo Region) and another 28 in the Kanludere area, near Sevlievo. Voivode Stefan Karadja was seriously wounded, seized by the Turkish posse and taken to the Rousse prison, where he died of his wounds. Half-dead he was hanged by the Turks. As a result of insistent requests before the local authorities, Tonka Obretenova reclaimed his head. Now it is buried in the Pantheon of National Revival Figures in Rousse. The forty remaining survivors of the detachment, led by Hadji Dimiter, following supreme effort, reached Bouzloudja Mount in the Balkan Range. On July 18, 1868 they were surrounded by numerous bashibozuk and professional Turkish soldiers and following hard several-hour resistance almost all of them were killed. Voivode Hadji Dimiter, immortalized in Hristo Botev's poem, also died.

The feat of the detachment of Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadja, their heroism and selflessness found deep resonance in the Bulgarians' consciousness and the then international community. The democratic societies of Europe and Russia, diplomatic circles and journalists commented the heroism of the Bulgarian revolutionaries for a long time. Although the attempts of all-national uprising failed, the crisis in Turkey aggravated and the Sublime Porte was compelled to settle the Greek-Bulgarian church dispute in favour of an independent Bulgarian church.

The patriotic feat of Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadja helped overcoming the idealization of the revolutionary potential inside the country. The reasons for the failure of the detachment movement were analyzed and soon the important conclusion about the need of serious organizational-political and military-technical potential inside the country was drawn. It was not a mere chance that persons, such as Vassil Levski and Lyuben Karavelov subjected the ideological, political-tactical and strategic views of detachment supporters among the revolutionary emigration to critical review. Nevertheless, the dead revolutionaries showed how one should work for the nation's cause and how high the value of freedom was. The feat of these, who perished for national liberation, set an example for the followers, the Bulgarians' cause increased in importance for the opponents of the Sublime Porte in Europe and accelerated the movement of the suffering Bulgarian people towards its cherished dream: liberation and establishment of a new Bulgaria.

¹ Irregular Turkish troops.

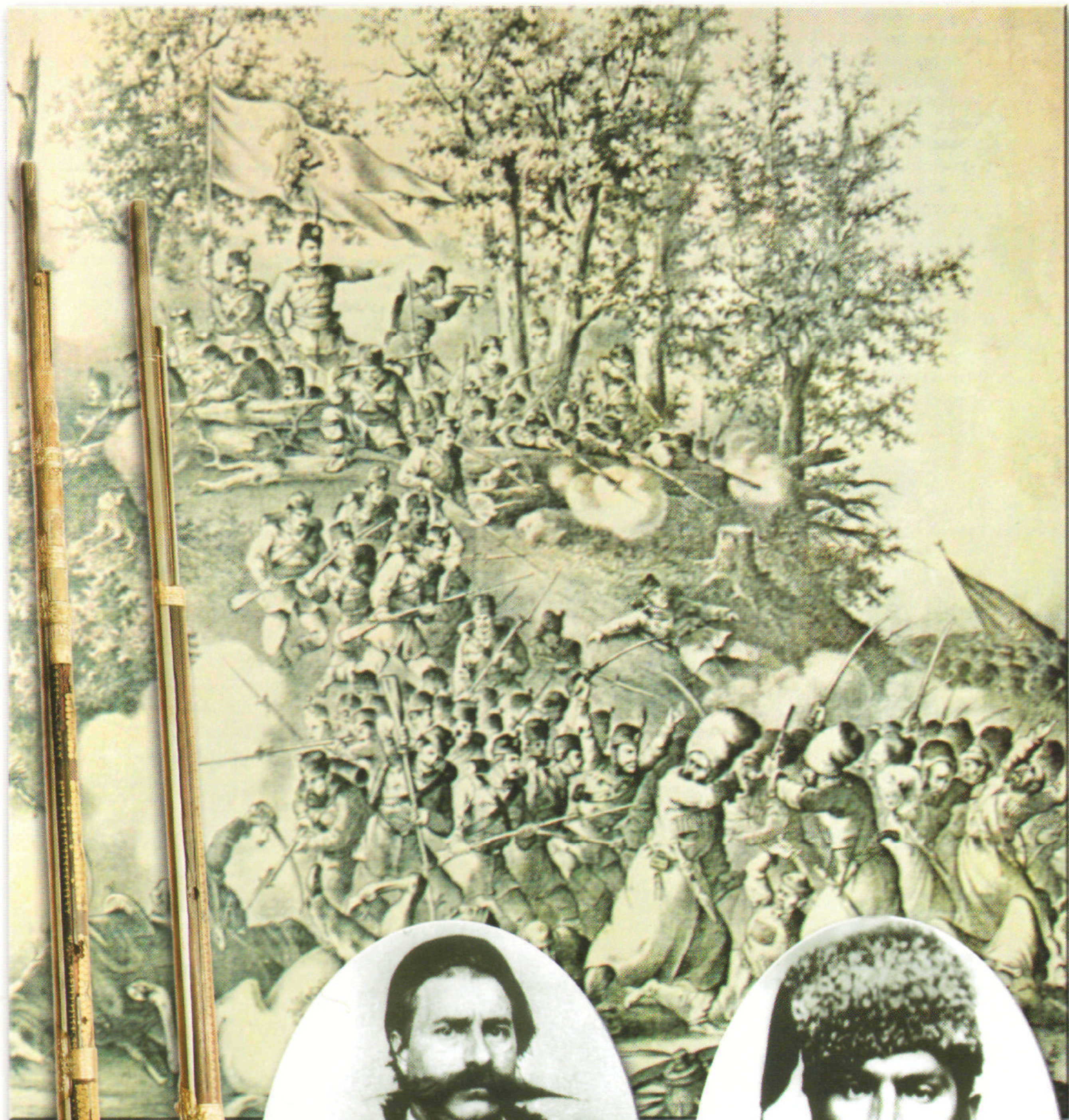
The second battle of the detachment of Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadja on 18 June 1868 (lithography, National Art Gallery)

Portrait of Voivode [Leader] Panayot Hitov, photo, made in Belgrade, 1867

Portrait of Voivode [Leader] Stefan Karadja, photo

Rifles, equipped with capsule ignition, used by detachment members (NMMH)

Pistols, equipped with flint ignition of Panayot Hitov



VASSIL LEVSKI - IDEOLOGIST AND ORGANIZER OF THE BULGARIAN NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Vassil Levski (Vassil Ivanov Kounchev) is the most important figure in the Bulgarian national history. Even today he is a measure of morality, patriotic duty and self-denial in the name of the fatherland having devoted all his powers to Bulgaria's liberation.

He was born in Karlovo on June 6, 1837 in a craftsman family with five children. His father died too early and only at the age of 14 Vassil had to help his mother in providing the living of the family. After attending the local school in the course of three years, under the influence of his uncle he became a monastery novice. He studied shortly in Stara Zagora and then became a monk under the name of Ignatii.

In the spring of 1862 Vassil Levski learnt about the appeal of G.S. Rakovski and went to Belgrade, where he enrolled in the First Bulgarian Legion. There, at the assault of the Belgrade Fortress, he got his baptism of fire and his historic name of Levski. After the Legion was disbanded, Levski returned to his native place, where he worked for a while as a teacher in the village of Voynyagovo, Karlovo Region, and later, in the village of Enikyoi, Dobroudja Region. At the beginning of 1867 he decided to join one of the emigrant detachments and headed for Bucharest. On Rakovski's recommendation he was chosen as colour-bearer of the detachment of Panayot Hitov. Later, Levski enrolled in the Second Bulgarian Legion. Its disbanding foiled plans for organizing an uprising in the interior of the country. Even the heroic example of the detachment of Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadja could not mobilize the revolutionaries inside Bulgaria.

The misfortunes of the revolutionary movement resulted in re-assessment of the situation and seeking of new, more efficient formula for success of the struggle for liberation. Vassil Levski's letters to Naiden Gerov and Panayot Hitov were indicative in this respect. They pointed to the necessity of adopting a new approach to the problem of organizing an uprising in Bulgaria. Levski considered that the systematic revolutionary propaganda and military, technical and physical training of the people inside the country would help overcome the political apathy, the lack of organization and, finally, the non-preparedness for an uprising.

In the late 1860s he toured twice Bulgaria and set up the first revolutionary committees. For about an year and a half he succeeded in establishing a broad network of committees. The Lovech Committee was ahead of the Internal Revolutionary Organization (IRO) and a link with the emigration in Romania was effected via specially

built up secret rings. In 1871 Levski drafted a Statute of IRO. It provided that "a mass revolution can totally transform the Ottoman autocratic-tyrannical system and replace it with a democratic republic, in which all nationalities will enjoy equality." As a whole, Levski's political views are stated in the draft Statute. Its key aspects were discussed in the circles of the revolutionaries.

It was highly important that the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCC) in Bucharest became aware that without the strength and influence of IRO the desired success of the preparation of a large-scale uprising could not be achieved. Employing high patience and tough work Levski succeeded in persuading the emigrants and the revolutionaries from inside the country of the need of concerted efforts and self-sacrifice in the name of the common cause. This was obvious from the documents of the First General Meeting of BRCC held from April 29 - May 5, 1872. The summer and autumn of 1872 were highly fruitful in the operation of BRCC and IRO. Levski extended the network of revolutionary committees, set up district centres and introduced a system of military chiefs of the committees.

Destiny did not allow Levski enough time to develop the issue of the financial provision of the uprising. He was prevented by the rash actions of his assistant Dimitar Obshti, who performed a robbery of the Turkish Posts. Dozens of committee members were arrested, including Dimitar Obshti. At that time Levski was in Southern Bulgaria and, after assessing the situation that has been established, he decided that he had to go to Romania and familiarize BRCC with the situation in IRO after the arrests made. He was intercepted in the village of Kukrina, Lovech Region on February 6/18, 1873 and hanged in Sofia.

After Levski's death a crisis emerged in BRCC and IRO. In late 1875 it was overcome and a number of activists of the younger generation, such as G. Benkovski, P. Volov and T. Kablesnikov, based on the committees, set up by Levski, began accelerated preparation of an uprising in the spring of 1876. The April Uprising is the culmination of the efforts and activity of the revolutionary forces. It would not have been possible without the things done and taught by Levski.

His deed is as an example of selfless service solely and only in the name of the people even today. His life and work are moral and political acme of the Bulgarian National Revival, which teaches the generations to work tirelessly for the benefit and prosperity of Bulgaria.

Portrait of Vassil Levski wearing a winter military uniform, Bucharest, 1868

Revolver, Gasser system, M. 1870, owned by Vassil Levski (National Museum of Military History, NMMH)

Vassil Levski's sword, Vassil Levski's Museum, town of Lovech

Levski's cross, which his uncle gave him as present after visiting Jerusalem in 1861 (NMMH)

Part of Vassil Levski's letter to Voivode [Leader] Panayot Hitov, 1868



...ако нећурент,
нурент за уџет народѣ,
ако узгуд узгуд сам ментен.

В. Аббикин.

THE HEROIC PATH OF BOTEV'S DETACHMENT - 1876

One of the remarkable events that would always fill us with pride and self-confidence of a nation with European dignity is the bold march of Botev's detachment in late May 1876. The selfless patriotism of the Botev detachment was an expression of solidarity and commitment to the great cause of the April Uprising. The readiness for self-sacrifice of the Bulgarian emigrants that took part in the detachment's march was a confirmation of the patriarch of the Bulgarian national revolution G.S. Rakovski: "The love to the fatherland was above all good things in the world!"

In the days of the April Uprising our emigrants in Romania and the neighbouring countries followed closely the development of the events. The sincerity and patriotism of every honest person was put to the test due to the all-national nature of the fight of the participants in the April Uprising who rebelled in the name of Bulgaria's revival. An outstanding personality, possessing undoubted leadership and organizational skills, Hristo Botev set up a detachment of 200 people: committed patriotically-minded emigrants, ready to embark on the road of fighting. Office Nikola Voinovski was first assistant to Voivode Hristo Botev and Nikola Kourouto Simov was the colour-bearer. The other members of the leadership were Nikola Obretenov, Ivanitsa Danchov, father Sava Katrafilov, Georgi Apostolov, etc. The voivode's brother, Kiril Botev, Vassil Levski's brother, Peter, and other well-known names among the patriotic emigration of the Danubian ports also enrolled as members of the detachment.

Without having enough time for special military training, the detachment members, dressed up as gardeners and traders took control over the Austrian steamer "Radetzky". On May 17, 1876 they landed at Kozloduy, kissed their homeland and without losing time headed for the centre of the nearest revolutionary district, Vratsa. The immortal march of Botev's detachment

began from Kozloduy. On May 18 at Milin Kamuk they were involved in a heavy battle with numerous posse of Circassians and bashibozuk. The colour-bearer and some 30 members of the detachment died. On May 19 they headed for Veslets and then to Vola Mount, over the town of Vratsa. The serial severe battle with bashibozuk and professional military units was held on the following day. In the evening of May 20/June 2 a surprising bullet killed the voivode on the southeastern slope of the Kamarata Ridge, where the staff of the detachment gathered to discuss the situation. Left without support, food and ammunition, exhausted of fatigue and tension, the detachment members dispersed but soon came upon the posses persecuting them. Nikola Voinovski, who along with part of the detachment headed for Panagyurishte hoping to help the uprising there, also found a worthy death. The arrested detachment members were brought to trial by the Turkish authorities and served with serious sentences - imprisonment and exile.

Although defeated by the Turks, Hristo Botev's detachment has left a clear mark within the most significant revolutionary event, organized by the Bulgarians, the April Uprising. With the daring but civilized seizure of control over the "Radetzky" steamer, the detachment popularized in a specific way the national cause of the Bulgarians that revolted in April 1876. The feat of Botev's detachment is reasonably associated with the April Uprising. The recognition and respect for the immortal bravery of Hristo Botev and the dead revolutionary came shortly after the Liberation. The date of the poet and revolutionary Botev's death, June 2, has been declared as day of paying tribute to those who died for the people's liberation. The example of Botev's detachment has set a standard, towards which all generations of Bulgarians, advocate of their homeland's prosperity, should aspire.

¹ Irregular Turkish troops.

Hristo Botev's Detachment Lands at Kozloduy May 1876, D. Gyudjenov

Portrait of Hristo Botev, Bucharest, 1875 (archives of the Institute of History with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)

Hristo Botev's watch, Hristo Botev's House-Museum, town of Kalofer

Facsimile of Hristo Botev's farewell letter to his wife Veneta (Sts. Cyril and Methodius National Library)

List of names in Hristo Botev's notebook (Sts. Cyril and Methodius National Library)



...Тоз, който падне
в бой за свобода,
той не умира...

K. Todorov

APRIL UPRISING - 1876

The 1876 April Uprising in Bulgaria serves an example of political commitment and responsibility towards the nation's fate even today. The April Uprising is a proof of the Bulgarians' firm desire to fight for their freedom and build up a new Bulgaria. It was organized by the young generation of Bulgarian revolutionaries that had abandoned the slavish inferiority complexes and was resolved to revive Bulgaria as a part of the family of the civilized European peoples.

The unsuccessful attempt for an uprising in the autumn of 1875 did not stop the revolutionary aspirations inside the Bulgarian lands. The isolation of the Ottoman Empire in the international relations and the unsuccessful efforts to modernize it were used by the national revolutionaries in the Balkans that had a clear goal: national liberation and independence of the free states, such as Romania, Serbia and Montenegro. The whole complex of international and internal political factors enhanced the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Bulgarians and stimulated them for decisive actions. The spirit of the organizers of the April Uprising was revealed in a letter by Nikola Obretenov to his mother, baba Tonka Obretenova, a well-known Bulgarian woman, who actively helped the revolutionary movement: "we will either all die or liberate Bulgaria!" Even the conservative English paper "The Times", known for its pro-Ottoman publications was forced to conclude that "the saving of the Ottoman Empire would be impossible, if the rebellious flames spread to Bulgaria."

The radical forces among the Bulgarian revolutionaries became aware of the challenges of the day, perceived the realistic tendencies in the international relations and decided to accomplish their struggle. They were not so much convinced in the military victory over the Ottoman oppressors, equipped with modern arms and having numerical superiority over them, but rather believed that Russia and the other European countries would not leave the Bulgarians alone in their fair fight for Bulgaria's freedom and reinstatement.

The members of the established Giurgiu Committee divided the country into four revolutionary districts: First, Turnovo, with Stefan Stambolov as Chief Leader (Apostle), and Hristo Bunito Karaminkov and Georgi Izmirliiev as assistants, Second, Sliven, headed by Ilarion Dragostinov, assisted by Georgi Obretenov and Stoil Voivode, Third, Vratsa, with Stoyan Zaimov as Chief Leader, and Nikola Obretenov and Nikola Slavkov as assistants, and Fourth, Plovdiv (Panagyurishte), led by Panayot Volov, assisted by Georgi Benkovski. Later Georgi Ikononov and Zahari Stoyanov were also attracted as assistants. The leaders of the uprising assumed the tactic of continuous defence in anticipation of the decisive interference of the Great Powers in favour of the Bulgarians. Undoubtedly, this tactic was in full harmony with the strategic goal of the uprising although it entailed to a certain extent a retreat of Levski's ideas of independence of the Bulgarian national liberation forces from external factors. The Giurgiu activists did not elect central leadership or common plan of the uprising and the four revolutionary districts did not cover the whole country's territory.

Fourth Revolutionary District was the most active one. The network of committees was extended. The organizational skills of Georgi Benkovski were revealed in the course of the preparations of the uprising. Panayot Volov transferred his powers of Chief Leader to Benkovski and became his assistant. Both paid serious attention to the military technical preparation. Due to betrayal the uprising had to break out earlier. Upon an attempt of being arrested, Todor Kableshev announced the beginning of the Uprising in Koprivshtitsa on April 20, 1876. He sent the famous "Bloody Letter" to the revolutionaries in Klisoura and Panagyurishte. The Uprising Forces Commander Pavel Bobekov gave a signal for seizure of power in the town. Ivan Sokolov was appointed as Town-Major. An Interim Government was proclaimed and an Appeal towards the Bulgarian People adopted urging "every honest Bulgarian to revolt" and show the civilized world its determination to fight for its freedom.

Gradually, dozens of villages in the region revolted. Benkovski organized the famous "Flying Detachment" the colours of which was made by teacher Raina Popgeorgieva. Within several days a larger part of the villages in Sredna Gora and the right bank of Maritsa River were liberated. The torrential rains on April 27 and the following days made the ammunition unfit for usage. Meanwhile, the Ottoman authority quickly pulled itself together and the bashi-bozuk were followed by professional army with modern artillery and firearms. The battle for Panagyurishte and the other settlements that had revolted was uneven. The town was set on fire and its population was chased away and subjected to mass killings. The rebel camp at Eledjik was destroyed.

Heroic battles were held at the villages in the outskirts of the Rhodope Mountain: Peroushtitsa, Bratsigovo, Batak and others. When the Ottoman troops invaded Peroushtitsa part of its brave defenders hid in the church. The artillery shells broke its walls and the consequences were dreadful. The heroes would prefer a worthy death to being killed by the oppressors. Kocho Chestimenski and Spas Ginev killed their wives and children and then committed suicides. Their unprecedented example was followed by other defenders of this "nest of heroes". Peroushtitsa was set on fire and its population killed. However, it has gone down in the national history as an eternal example of aspiration towards freedom and human dignity.

The defence of Bratsigovo was also impressive. In the course of almost a week 500 brave rebels under the leadership of Vassil Petleshkov defended their native town. The professional army with modern artillery placed the rebels in a deadlock. Petleshkov was seized and subjected to inhumane torture.

The destiny of Batak, where some 5,000 people were slaughtered was also tragic. The international community was familiarized with the dreadful events there due to noted US journalist Macgahan.

Of the other revolutionary districts only the Turnovo one took an active part in the uprising. Due to weaknesses in the revolutionary propaganda it was only separate detachments that undertook some action and they did not coordinate their efforts. A 200-strong detachment was set up by the revolutionaries of the villages of Mousina, Byala Cherkva, Mihaltsi and others under the command of Father Hariton and Military Commander Parmakov. It had a staff of 16 councillors, including teachers Bacho Kiro, Todor Lefterov and Hristo Karaminkov. In the course of nine days the detachment fought with the 10,000-strong army of Fazli Pasha. Almost all died as martyr-heroes in the flames of the Dryanovo Monastery.

In the Gabrovo Region Tsanko Dyustabanov led a 219-strong detachment. The mountainous villages of Kruvenik, Batoshevo and Novo Selo also revolted. In spite of the heroism all three villages were destroyed, robbed and put on fire and the Bulgarians subjected to mass killings.

The April Uprising continued for about a month. The forces opposed in it were uneven but the Bulgarians had moral superiority. Some 10,000 armed revolutionaries took part in it as in certain regions almost the whole population joined the combat actions. The uprising was suppressed with severe cruelty and hundreds of settlements were destroyed. The villainies performed upon its suppression revealed the real gap between the Bulgarian people and the Sultan's power. Their further mutual existence became impossible.

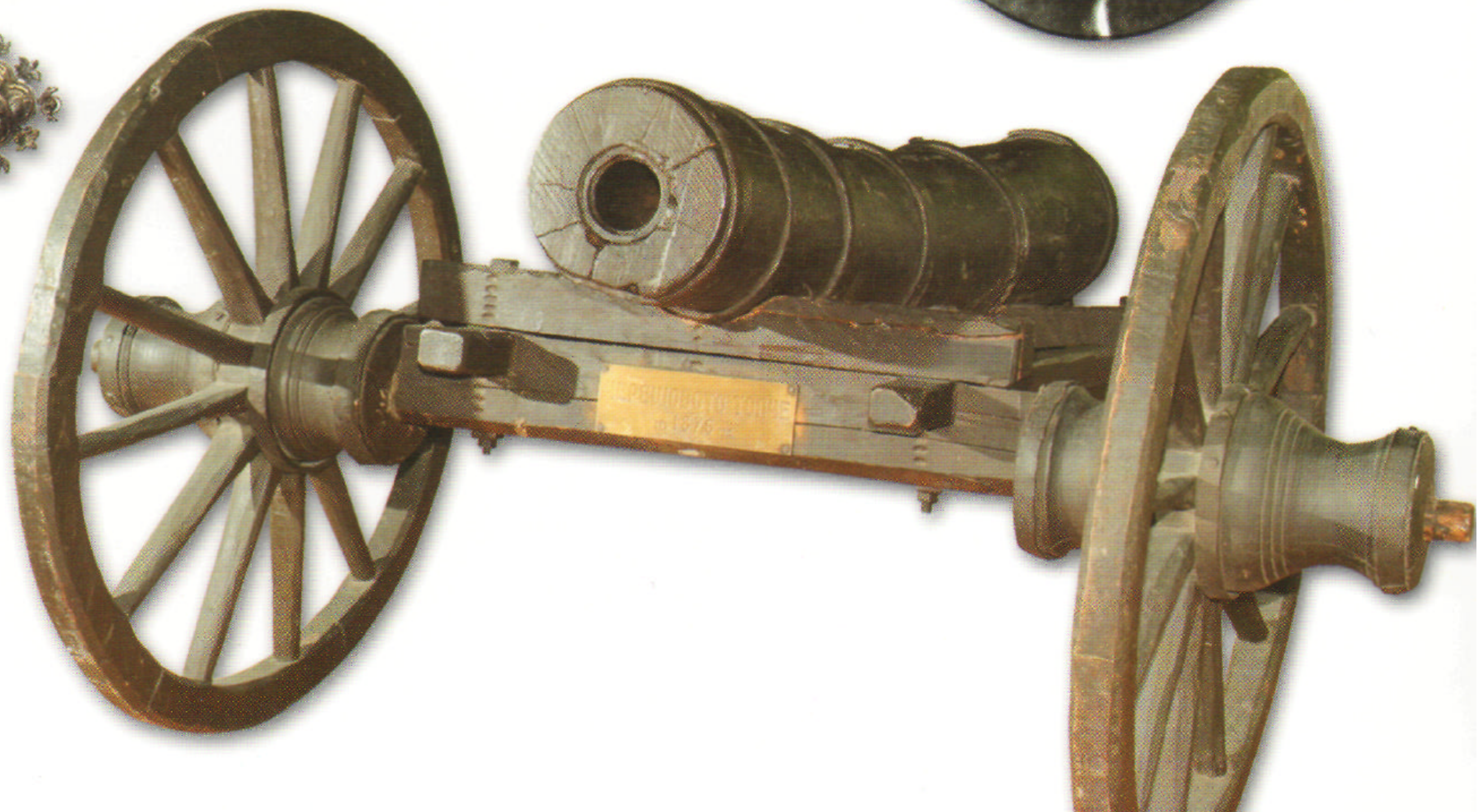
The April Uprising showed the civilized world the barbarian image of the Ottoman despotism and its cruel nature as governmental-political system. It discredited the policy of the patron-countries of the Ottoman Empire maintaining the status-quo in the Balkans. Through their sacrifice and selflessness the Bulgarian nation won the sympathy of the whole democratic world which became committed to the settlement of the Bulgarian question. This was the historic significance of the 1876 April Uprising.

Georgi Benkovski's "Flying Detachment", P. Morozov (NMMH)
Photos of Georgi Benkovski, Panayot Volov and Todor Kableshev
Replica of a cherry tree small cannon

Pistol equipped with flint ignition of Todor Kableshev (NMMH)

The cross of Benkovski's "Flying Detachment" (Historical Museum of Panagyurishte)

¹ Irregular Turkish troops.



1877 - 1878 RUSSO-TURKISH LIBERATING WAR

The 1876 April Uprising and its cruel suppression provoked the sympathy of the whole international community. Western Europe and America were familiarized objectively with the facts about this event by the publications of Macgahan, Peer, Girardin, Petris and many other journalists. Great French writer Victor Hugo, noted Italian revolutionary Garibaldi, Gladstone, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and many other world-famous personalities declared themselves in support of the Bulgarians. The bold and challenging conduct of the Sublime Porte and the failure of the Constantinople Ambassador Conference (1876) for the granting of autonomy to the Bulgarians in their natural ethnic-territorial area gave moral and political right as well as diplomatic grounds to Russia to declare a war on the Ottoman Empire. Although it was not prepared for that, on April 12/24, 1877 Emperor Alexander II signed a manifesto for declaring a war to Turkey in Chissinau.

According to the initial plan of General Nikolay Obruchev, military actions were to be held simultaneously on two fronts: in the Balkans and in Caucasus. The Balkan front, where a 190,000-strong Russian army was opposed to a 186,000-strong Turkish army was the main one.

Due to torrential rains, the offensive of the Russian army began only on June 10/22, 1877 with the military actions of General Tsimerman. Several days later, on June 15/27, 1877, General Mihail Dragomirov surprisingly performed a crossing over the Danube at Svishtov and liberated this town, along with Nikopol. On Bulgarian land, the Russian army began its liberating mission in three directions: the Eastern Detachment, headed by crown prince Alexander Alexandrovich, consisting of some 70,000 infantrymen, 5,000 cavalrymen and 2,000 artillerymen headed towards the fortified rectangle, Silistra-Rousse-Shoumen-Varna; the Western Detachment, headed by General Kridener, consisting of some 35,000 people, headed to Pleven; and the Front Detachment, consisting of 12,000 soldiers (including Bulgarian volunteers), headed by General Gurko, was assigned to seize the Balkan Range passes and not to admit the penetration of Turkish forces in Southern Bulgaria. Turnovo was liberated on July 7, 1877 and on July 14 the Front Detachment soldiers crossed the Balkan Range to reach Stara Zagora.

The Bulgarians were actively involved and helped to the best of their abilities the Russian army. Voivode [Leader] Panayot Hitov organized a numerous detachment of volunteers that were valuable intelligence agents. Women and children provided not only information about the movement of the enemy but also assisted in the transportation of the combat equipment, provide lodging, food, drinking water, bondage for the wounded and the ill. Thus only in a week's time the army made a 120-kilometer passage from the Danube to

Shipka and Stara Zagora was liberated on July 22. Hundreds of Russian soldiers and Bulgarian volunteers died in the fights for this town. The Bulgarian volunteer forces got their baptism of fire there and were praised by the Russian command. Several colour-bearers of the Samara colours died but it was saved.

Due to the numerical and fire superiority of the enemy, the Russian soldiers were forced to withdraw towards Shipka Mount. The army of Suleiman Pasha performed mass killings, robberies and burnt many buildings. The foreign correspondents sounded the alarm that "massacres against the Bulgarians exceed the ones of May 1876" and "Daily News" paper wrote: "Stara Zagora reminds these days of the cruelties in Batak". The aggression of the oppressors additionally motivated the Bulgarians and although they retreated, later they performed a remarkable feat on Shipka Mount that was later eternalized in an unprecedented artistic and poetic manner by Ivan Vazov in the poem "The Volunteers at Shipka".

The defence of the Shipka Pass was assigned to the Orlovsk and Bryansk regiments, supported by the five Bulgarian volunteer detachments of a total numerical strength of some 7,000 people. The three-day fights, on August 9, 10 and 11, 1877 have gone down as heroic examples of bravery in the Bulgarian military history. They culminated on August 11, when furious and desperate life-and-death battle was fought among rifle and gun cannonade under the sound of 600 and drums and military trumpets. Six enemy attacks were beaten off by noon alone. A large part of the defenders of the Mount died. Thus Shipka is remembered as a symbol of the freedom of today's Bulgaria. Later Russian writer Nemirovich-Danchenko wrote about the heroism of the Bulgarian volunteers: "They resembled real lions. Fighting their centennial enemies they would neither spare their lives nor expect mercy from them."

The successful defence of Shipka had an effect on the overall progress of the war. The conquerors were respected and demotivated. The siege of Pleven was broken and the town-major Osman Pasha surrendered together with his garrison, consisting of thousands of soldiers. Under exceptionally tough winter conditions the Russian troops headed by General Gurko crossed the Balkan Range and on January 4, 1878 liberated Sofia and took the Turkish colours into captivity. The southern detachment of General Radetski began invasion at Sheinovo that same day. 22,000 Turkish soldiers and Veisel Pasha himself were taken captives. After continuous victories over the enemy cease-fire was concluded in Adrianople on January 31, 1878 followed by a Peace Treaty in the outskirts of San Stefano, near Constantinople, on March 19/3, 1878. The Bulgarians' happiness was enormous. Their century-long dream was fulfilled: Bulgaria was free!

The Defence of Orlovo Gnezdo, A. Popov (NMMH)
Krnka Carabine, M. 1861, 15.2 mm calibre (NMMH)
Revolver, Smith & Wesson system, M. 1869, 10.67 mm calibre
Knives of participants in Russo-Turkish Liberation War
"The Volunteers at Shipka", Ivan Vazov



О, Шипка!

*Три дена младите дружини
как прохода бранят. Горските долини
трепетно повтарят на боя ревът...*



BULGARIAN VOLUNTEERS IN RUSSO-TURKISH WAR

The Bulgarian volunteers in the Russo-Turkish War provide historical evidence of the continuity between pre-liberation national revolutionary movements and the national armed forces of the new Bulgarian state after 1878.

The Bulgarian volunteer forces were established parallel to the diplomatic, moral, political and military preparation of Russia for the liberating war. The core of the Bulgarian volunteers, having participated in the 1876 Serb-Turkish War, formed the Honorary Fifth Escort under the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. It included three battalions. Due to the high number of volunteers, who participated in the April Uprising and were emigrants in Romania, Vlachia and the Bulgarian lands under Ottoman rule, the escort was restructured into six battalions and renamed as Bulgarian Volunteer Forces. Each battalion had five up to 1,002-strong companies. As at June 16, 1877 the Volunteer Forces already included 7,444 lower-ranking officers, 72 officers, four staff officers and one general. Another six battalions and several mounted detachments were formed in the course of the war with the numerical strength exceeding 12,000 people.

On May 6/18, 1877, in a solemn ceremony in Ploest, in the presence of many foreign correspondents, diplomats, Romanian citizens, Bulgarian emigrants, Russian soldiers and officers, the Samara colours was handed to 3rd detachment of 3rd battalion. Having survived in the fights and battles for liberation, it became a symbol of the honour, dignity and patriotism, the national cause and idea, the aspirations and interests of the Bulgarian people. The colours was made of three silk strips: white, red and blue. On the right side it featured the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius and on the left one Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. It bore the inscription: 'To the Bulgarian people, town of Samara - 1876'. The colours was made by the nuns of the monastery near Samara. While swearing an oath under the colours, P. Alabin made a brief speech stressing that it was a gift of the "whole Russian land". The old revolutionary, Tseko Petrov bid that "the colours passed through the whole Bulgarian land". The handing of the colours and the swearing of an oath under it lifted the spirit and the self-confidence of the volunteers. In the battles they

managed to preserve it untarnished with the price of several lives, including the one of the brave Lieutenant-Colonel Kalitin. Finally, the colours was saved by Russian non-commissioned officer Foma Timofeev and volunteer Nikola Korchev. The Bulgarian Volunteer Force was under the command of N.G. Stoletov.

Three days after swearing an oath, the volunteers marched solemnly in front of the images of Cyril and Methodius paying tribute to the deed of the first Slav patrons of the Bulgarian army. The Bulgarian volunteers were equipped with French rifles Chassepot. In the autumn of 1877 they were rearmed with Russian rifles Krnka. Thus, duly armed, the volunteers fought selflessly in the cold January weather against the fortifications of Veisel Pasha at Shipka - Sheinovo. About their skills as soldiers Chief of Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Rinkevic later wrote: "This young volunteer force is surprising. Within three month it revealed itself as a real professional army that can be quoted as example". In his last order to the Russian soldiers, Gen. Gurko noted the bravery of the Bulgarian volunteers by saying: "This was the first battle in which you fought with the enemy and you at once showed yourself as heroes with which the whole Russian army can be proud. You are the core of the future Bulgarian army. Years will pass and this future Bulgarian army will say: "We are successors of the glorious defenders of Stara Zagora."

The Russian General's words were an eloquent evidence that the Bulgarian volunteer force had turned from an auxiliary into first-degree combat unit. This was confirmed not only in the battles at Stara Zagora, Shipka and Sheinovo but also through the whole war. After the liberation, the participants in the Volunteer Force were among the most respected citizens and fighters decorated with high state and military awards, such as the "For Bravery" order, jubilee medals, etc. On occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Shipka Battle, the veterans were decorated with a special silver cup of Russian Emperor Nikolay II. After the liberation the Bulgarian volunteers were among the first participants in the newly-established armed forces, real fighters and champions of the 1885 Union of the Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia and its defenders during the Serb-Bulgarian War.

The Samara colours /replica/ (NMMH)

Chassepot rifle, M. 1866, 11 mm calibre

Krnka rifle, M. 1861, 15.2 mm calibre

Portrait of the last colour-bearer of the Samara colours, Nikola Korchev (NMMH)

Uniform and armament of a detachment member having participated in the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War (NMMH)

Orders and medals of Nikola Korchev (NMMH)



TURNOVO CONSTITUTION

After the decisions of the Berlin Congress in the summer of 1878 one of the most urgent and important tasks of the Provisional Russian Government in the liberated Bulgarian lands was to prepare the grounds for the establishment of an independent modern Bulgarian state. For this purpose Prince Dondukov-Korsakov was given detailed instructions about the key elements of the "Organizational Statute", i.e. the Constitution of the fledgling Bulgarian state. The Prince himself was a participant in the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War as Chief of 13th Army Corps and Commander of the Eastern Detachment. After the signing of the San Stefano Peace Treaty on February 19, 1878, he was appointed as Russian Emperor's Commissioner in Bulgaria as he was assigned with heading the Government's Council.

The governing circles and government of Russia wanted that the Bulgarian Prince was "elected by the people" and restricted in his powers. The constitution of the reinstated Bulgarian state was drafted by the experienced Russian jurist and constitutional expert Sergey Lukiyarov, Head of the Legal Department. He sent a letter to the most eminent Bulgarian public and political figures such as Dragan Tsankov, Marin Drinov, Marko Balabanov, Todor Broumov, Antim I, Ekzarch Yosif, etc. requiring answers to 16 important questions concerning the state on which he voiced his views. By the end of October 1878 Lukiyarov completed his project and referred it for approval to the competent bodies of the Russian Government. In December that year the draft document was discussed at a "special meeting". Recommendations towards its democratization were made: to introduce universal direct and secret suffrage, as in Switzerland, to extend the rights of the national representation, i.e. of the National Assembly that should be the only interpreter of laws. The draft constitution envisages freedom of associations and meetings, observation of the secrecy of private correspondence, broad rights and freedoms of the press, etc. The Russian draft of a modern and democratic constitution takes into account the democratic traditions in the Bulgarian society of the National Revival period and targets the establishment of a social basis for lasting Russian political and cultural influence.

On February 10, 1878 the inaugural meeting of the Kingdom of Bulgaria began operating in the old Bulgarian capital of Turnovo. It included 229 representatives. Ninety-two people were elected directly by the people, 21 were appointed by Prince Dondukov and the rest were named "by right". In his opening speech he clearly stated before the national representatives that the proposed draft did not aim to restrict their convictions and that only the Bulgarian people-elected national representatives would have the last say in the discussions. In order to avoid possible accusations of pressure and manipulation, the Prince quit the hall and left the representative to decide on their own and adopt the content of the basic state law, the

Constitution.

At the beginning of the work of the inaugural meeting, the representatives of Eastern Rumelia, Macedonia and Adrianople Thrace familiarized the participants with the suffering and requests of the Bulgarians, whom they represented. The interference of Prince Dondukov helped overcome the emotion and switch towards considering the draft document. Two main movements and tendencies in the Bulgarian political life were formed in the progress of the discussions: Conservative and Liberal. The numerical superiority of the Liberals helped them impose their ideas.

The Turnovo Constitution was adopted on April 16, 1879. According to it, Bulgaria was a parliamentary monarchy with moderate liberal structure. The Prince and the National Assembly shared the powers of governance as the Bulgarian Monarch was "supreme representative and head of the state" initialling and promulgating the National Assembly-adopted laws. He was Supreme-Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and the bodies of the executive (Government) would operate under his supervision. The cabinet ministers were appointed by the monarch and would report to him. The prince represented the state in international relations and was not to be held liable for his deeds under the civil and penal law before the people, the Parliament and the judicial bodies.

The Turnovo Constitution provided the Bulgarian electorate with broad civil rights, freedom of speech and press and of religious faiths and protected the right and inviolability of private property, economic initiative, association and spiritual property. In terms of content it was influenced by the decisions of the Berlin Congress and the historical characteristic features of the epoch. The Constitution also had certain disadvantages: it deprived half of the citizens of the Kingdom of political rights; the Prince's powers, under certain conditions, allowed the establishment of monocratic regime and turning of the National Assembly into a convenient instrument for the fulfillment of selfish ambitions.

Soon after the adoption of the Turnovo Constitution, the first Grand National Assembly was called on April 17, 1879 and it elected the first Bulgarian Head of State in accordance with the Constitution's requirements. Russian Emperor Alexander II and his Government did not object to the nomination of young German Prince Alexander Battenberg of Hesse, participant in the liberating Russo-Turkish War.

On proposal by Prof. Marin Drinov, Sofia was chosen as Bulgaria's capital. The Turnovo Constitution not only gave an impetus to the country's social, economic and cultural development but also provided a stimulus in the efforts and fights for the Bulgarians' national unification. Even today it is an evidence of historic vitality and guarantee for this country's European prospects.

Alexander I, Konrad Dielitz (NMMH)

The Turnovo Constitution, 1879

Rifle of Prince Alexander I that he received as present from Russian Emperor Alexander II (NMMH)

Revolver of Prince Alexander I (NMMH)

Poniard of Prince Alexander I (NMMH)

Binoculars of Prince Alexander I (NMMH)



THE UNION - 1885

After the April Uprising in 1876 and the liberating 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War, the Union of Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia (1885) was one of the most outstanding events in our modern history. For more than a century now it fills with pride the hearts of all sincere patriots and cherishes the faith of today's generations in Bulgaria's potential and possibility for prosperity.

Compelled to reconcile with the decisions of the Great Powers at the Berlin Congress in the summer of 1878 the Bulgarian people did not give up its National Revival ideal of full national union within a single state. The first attempt at unifying the Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia was made only in 1880. In the following years the champions of a united Bulgarian state gathered organizational and political experience and awaited favourable international situation for realizing the idea of the unification. On February 10, 1885, on Zahari Stoyanov's initiative, a group of patriots with revolutionary experience set up the Bulgarian Secret Central Revolutionary Committee (BSCRC) in Plovdiv, the capital of Eastern Rumelia. The Committee headed the all-national movement for union of the two Bulgarian states. Armed forces, such as the Bulgarian Kingdom Army, the Eastern Rumelian Militia, the volunteers, the gymnastic and combat volunteer societies took part in its organizing and holding.

On September 3, 1885 the Bulgarian Secret Central Revolutionary Committee decided to organize an uprising in Eastern Rumelia against the Ottoman administration in the region. The bell toll of the St. George Church in Plovdiv marked the beginning of the historic event. The united rebel forces and militia units were under the com-

mand of experienced Major Danail Nikolaev, Commander of Second Plovdiv Battalion. Hundreds of men from the villages near Plovdiv gathered to fight for the Union. In the historic night of September 5 to 6, 1885 events developed with unprecedented resolve and drive towards victory. At 14:00 hrs. the Union forces surrounded the residence of General Governor Gavril Krustevic. The national impulse and all-Bulgarian interests took the upper hand and the soldiers of the Eastern Rumelian militia and gendarmery joined the insurgent peasants. Left alone, Gavril Krustevic said that he was also a Bulgarian and would not object to the people's will. To everyone's satisfaction the takeover of power in Plovdiv was triumphant and almost peaceful. The only victim in this big political event was Major Raicho Nikolov, an active participant in the preparation and implementation of the Union.

On September 6, 1885 the Union was proclaimed and the unity of the Bulgarian state under the scepter of Prince Alexander I announced. An interim government was promptly set up in Plovdiv to govern the region by the arrival of the Prince. The Union of the Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia marked the first stage of the uniting of the Bulgarian people. It removed convincingly and worthily an unfair act in regards to the Bulgarians' aspirations and showed the seriousness of their efforts for a united nation. The Union is a logical continuation of the spirit and political programme of the 1876 April Uprising and a triumph of justice over suppression and external dependence. It is a proof of the integrity of the Bulgarian nation and its capability to defend its presence in world history.

Colours of the Chirpan Detachment, which took part in the effecting of the Union of Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, 1885 (NMMH)

Borba paper, issued by the Bulgarian Secret Revolutionary Committee, Plovdiv

Portraits of Danail Nikolaev, Zahari Stoyanov and Stefan Stambolov

Manifesto of Prince Alexander I proclaiming the Union of Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia



ПРАВДИНА СЕ ДОБИВА СЪ ПЪРВИНА



1885
ЧИРПАНЪ



БОРБА
ВЕДЪЛЕНЪ ВЪСТЕНЪ
РЕДАКТОРЪ И СТОЛЪСЪ

Ний
АЛЕКСАНДРЪ I^и
СЪ БОЖИЯТА МИЛОСТЬ И НАРОДНАТА ВОЛЯ
Князь на Съверна и Южна
България

Да бъде известно на моя любезен народ, че на 6-и юни
имаме за така наречената Источна Румелия следъ съединението
на тамошното досегашно правителство и войсковието на друго про-
свѣтено, обединено съединението на Источна Румелия съ Княжеството
и единично Ма прегласили на Князь и на тая областъ.

Мато имаме прѣдъ видъ божото на Вѣлгическото Народно, нѣтъ
нѣтъ гласно изказване да се обидѣ дѣтъ Вѣлгическото Народно въ единъ
и постигането на историческата му задача, азъ приемамъ съедине-
нието на станало и приемамъ отъ сѣга нѣтъ да бъде и се
именувамъ Князь на Съверна и Южна България.

Мато приемамъ управлението на тая областъ, азъ обещавамъ,
че вѣнство, името и честта на вѣнството мирни името, безъ реална
на зѣра и народността, ще бъдатъ запазени и гарантирани. За да
пазишъ на реда и тишината сѣ азъ вѣнството потрѣбни зѣра
и съ нѣтъшните имъ ще се потрѣбна съ вѣнството отъ тѣхъ
на вѣнство.

Надѣвамъ се, че любезенъ ми народъ и отъ дѣтъ страни на
Вѣлгическото, който съ тѣмъ радости и вѣнството вѣнството тѣмъ
лимо зѣбѣтъ, ще ми пораде своето съединение на вѣнството на
свѣтото дѣло — съединението на дѣтъ български области въ една държава
и ще бъде готовъ да направи вѣнството мирни и умирна да запа-
зени на единството и независимостта на малкото ми вѣнството.

Ний Князь на бѣмъ на вѣнството съ тѣмъ зѣра и вѣнството дѣло на
Вѣлгическото въ старата България Свѣтено Княжество тѣмъ дѣло на
бѣмъ Свѣтено дѣло и вѣнството и вѣнството и вѣнството.

SERB-BULGARIAN WAR - 1885

The Union of Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia on September 6, 1885 was hailed by all Bulgarian patriots. A temporary government, headed by Georgi Stranski, was formed in Eastern Rumelia. Two days later Prince Alexander I issued a Decree of the Union in Turnovo by which he recognized the revolutionary action and accepted to be named "prince of Northern and Southern Bulgaria". Undoubtedly, the all-national union was one of the events of history, in which the Bulgarian people, without the interference of external instigators and champions, stood united before the challenges of destiny.

All signatories of the Berlin Treaty but Great Britain were displeased with the Union. These were Bulgaria's neighbours, Russia, Germany, France and Austria-Hungary. The Sublime Porte (Ottoman Empire) even threatened that if the Great Powers did not take measures against these developments, it would forcefully reinstate the order in the Eastern Rumelian province. On October 24, 1885 in Constantinople a conference was called to settle the Bulgarian-Turkish dispute. Without awaiting its decisions, instigated by Austria-Hungary, on November 2 Serbia declared a war on Bulgaria under the pretext of "disturbing the balance in the Balkans". The Bulgarians' sovereign right to live in a united country was threatened.

The war declared by Bulgaria's western neighbour provoked an unprecedented patriotic upsurge among all layers of the Bulgarian society. Volunteer detachments, students and teachers from the high schools of Gabrovo, Turnovo and Plovdiv formed a 1,000-strong student legion. The voivodes [leaders] of the Bulgarian movement for national liberation, Panayot Hitov, Zhelyu Voivode, Dimitar Popgeorgiev, Ilyo Markov, etc. headed a number of volunteer units. These included many Bulgarian students, having returned from Russia, Switzerland, France, Austria-Hungary and Germany. One of the volunteers was the future founder of Bulgaria's Social Democracy Dimitar Blagoev. Young writer Aleko Konstantinov was also committed to the defence of his fatherland. The thousands of refugees from Macedonia were also taken up by enthusiasm and the wish for decisive resistance to the unexpected Serb aggression and they helped the Bulgarian army at the Slivnitsa front line.

Already in the first days of the war the numerous border detachments resisted seriously the Serb army. The Bulgarian troops began promptly withdrawing from

the Turkish border followed by the volunteers. The European community and foreign correspondents were surprised to see how the Bulgarian soldiers, under tough meteorological conditions and continuous marching, covered the distance from Svilengrad to Slivnitsa only in a few days and the most difficult 135-km section from the Belovo railway station to Slivnitsa - only in three days.

Combat actions near Slivnitsa began on November 5, 1885. In bloody fighting the Bulgarians took control over the Meka Crev hill. The "Daily News" correspondent reported the following about the first day of the war: "The Bulgarians fought with composure and bravery, worthy admiration." In the following days, at Tri Ushi, Gurgulyat and Komshica, the Serb troops were defeated, forced to withdraw and run away infamously. The decisive offensive occurred on November 10: Dragoman was taken over and the Bulgarian army advanced towards Piroto. Here the enemy was forced to withdraw inland. The detachments of Captain Popov, Captain Panitsa and Major Goudjev attacked the northern hills and after tough fights seized the Provalia ridge. The Serb army withdrew ingloriously towards Nis.

The Serb troops were defeated in Northwestern Bulgaria as well where the detachments of Captain Ouzounov successfully defended Vidin. By clever maneuvering and accurate shooting the 6,170-strong garrison of Vidin, divided in two sections, delivered decisive strikes at the Serb Army at the Timok. On November 14 the Bulgarian troops passed the border and seized Piroto in the late afternoon.

The Great Powers prevented the full defeat of Serbia. Austria-Hungary was most active in these efforts as its representative warned Bulgarian Prince Alexander I to stop the invasion. On December 9, 1885 Serbia and Bulgaria agreed on cease-fire. Negotiations were carried out in Bucharest. The Bulgarian Government gave up its demands for reparations and territorial claims as winner. On February 19, 1886 the two countries signed a peace treaty containing a single article: "Peace between Bulgaria and Serbia is restored."

Achieving a victory over Serbia, Bulgaria withstood its unity and showed before the civilized world that the cause of the Union between Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia was fair. Seven hundred people died and over 4,500 soldiers were wounded in this first war for national unification. The victory was a triumph for the Bulgarian national spirit and a proof of the political maturity and integrity of our people.

First Volunteer Detachment, photo
Sword of Artillery Chief Captain Olimpi Panov
Revolver of Peter Petrov, volunteer in the war
Double-barreled capsule hunting rifle (NMMH)
Henry Winchester rifle, M. 1866, 11 mm calibre
"The new Cemetery at Slivnitsa", Ivan Vazov



*И тоз венец - той няма да завене,
и тая песен вечно ще гърми
из българските планини зелени, и славата
ще вечно пей и стене над гробни ви хълми.*



ILINDEN-PREOBRAZHENIE UPRISING

The 1903 Ilinden-Preobrazhenie is the most heroic epic of the national liberation movement, a culmination of the armed fight led by the Bulgarian population of Macedonia and Adrianople against the state and political system of the Ottoman Empire. The Uprising was a continuation of the 1876 April Uprising and the 1885 Union of Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia. It was an utmost effort for attaining the national ideal of the epoch of the Bulgarian National Revival in the 18th-19th century. The autonomy of Macedonia and Adrianople, like the one in Eastern Rumelia, was only a tactical slogan behind which one could see the aspiration for unification of all Bulgarians in a single state in the name of the social, economic and cultural progress. This cause inspired the Bulgarians throughout the National Revival Period and became the meaning of life of a whole generation of revolutionaries. After the Union, the revolutionary activists of Macedonia and Adrianople found shelter in the Bulgarian Kingdom. They set up detachments in free Bulgaria, organized protest rallies, kept raising the questions about the still enslaved and oppressed Bulgarians before the Bulgarian and European public.

The basis of a large-scale revolutionary organization, styled after the one set up by Vassil Levski in the past, was set up in Thessaloniki in the autumn of 1893 by the followers of the movement for church independence and national education. The founders included patriots Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, Damyan Grouev and Ivan Hadjinikolov. The very form of the organization in Macedonia and Adrianople showed the commitment to the traditions and experience of the Bulgarian national revolutionary movement of the pre-liberation period. The political demands of the Bulgarian Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Committee were based on article 23 of the Berlin Treaty envisaging autonomy for all lands, densely populated with Bulgarian population. The revolutionaries relied that things would develop as in the case with Eastern Rumelia but were compelled to comply with the capacities of the still strong Ottoman Empire and the nationalist and aggressive ambitions of the neighbouring Balkan countries. Gotse Delchev took largely the credit for the popularization of the organization that was named Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization. A comprehensive detachment network was set up within a short time and it carried out mass propaganda and organizational activity, ensured arm supplies and trained the population to use it for the purpose of defence.

The strengthening of the revolutionary movement was an inevitable precondition for mass uprising in Macedonia and Adrianople. It broke out in Gorna Djoumaya in the autumn of 1902. Its organizers relied on improvement of Bulgarian-Russian relations and possible interference of Russia in favour of Macedonia's liberation. However, at that time the Russian Empire was too much involved in the conflict with Japan and had no plans to interfere in the settlement of the Balkan problem. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization held a congress in Thessaloniki in the first days of January which, for different reasons, was not attended by Gotse Delchev, Damyan Grouev, Gyuorche Petrov and Pere Toshev. The forum took a decision for a revolt as each district was to decide on its own whether it was prepared for it and set the time for its declaring.

At a congress in May 1903 the delegates of the Bitola Revolutionary District took a decision for an uprising. The

forum elected a Chief Staff, consisting of Damyan Grouev, A. Lozanchev and B. Sarafov. By the middle of July the three decided that the uprising should be declared on August 2, Ilinden (St. Iliya's Day). Only the Bulgarians from Adrianople followed Bitola's example for a mass uprising. On July 11, 1903 the Supreme Leadership of the Uprising headed by M. Gerdjikov, S. Ikonov and L. Madjarov was elected in the area of Petrova Niva on July 11, 1903. The Uprising in this district broke up on August 19, the Preobrazhenie [Transfiguration] Holiday. At most of the places it took the form of detachments' raids due to the insufficient training of the population and the lack of arms. A total of 239 severe battles were held during the uprising in the six revolutionary districts in which 26,408 revolutionaries were involved in a life-and-death fight with a 350,000-strong professional army and bashibozuk. Almost all mountainous regions of the Bitola, Lerin, Kostur, Ohrid and Kichevo districts were liberated within a short time. The rebels seized the town of Kroushevo. The government, set up there, was an example of mutual tolerance of different nationalities: Bulgarians, Greek and Vlachs. "Since the time of our grandfathers and great grandfathers we have been living as brothers on this land; we love each other and want to remain close up to the end," reads a proclamation of the Provision Government of the Kroushovo Republic that existed for ten days. On August 12 a 20,000-strong Turkish army with artillery under the command of Bahtiyar pasha advanced towards Kroushevo. Approaching the town Bahtiyar sent an ultimatum to the rebels to surrender voluntarily. They gave a prompt, clear and categorical answer: "We have revolted not to surrender bit to fight for the freedom of Macedonia." 1,200 rebels were involved in an uneven battle singing a song of the National Revival period that inspired the participants in the 1876 April Uprising as well: "The battle started, our hearts beat fast, our enemies are close " At the defence of the Sliva pass Georgi Stoyanov and 40 of his fellows opposed heroically a cavalry and land force attacks of the Turkish army. In the most dramatic moment Georgi Stoyanov shouted loudly: "Brothers, we are dying but we are the winners. People will remember this day, The nation will be proud with us!" The brave defenders died one by one. Bahtiar Pasha, in surprise and bewilderment, turned to his army: "Here you will see how one should die for his homeland and honour. Soldiers, let's pay tribute to these heroes! Fire!" Three salvos were heard in the pass

Many Bulgarian villages and the towns of Ahtopol and Vasiliko (today's Tsarevo) were liberated in the Adrianople Region already during the first days of the Uprising. The rebels showed heroism and selflessness worthy administration. As in Western Macedonia, a 40,000-strong Turkish army accompanied by artillery and cavalry was opposed to them there as well. The revenge taken on the civil population was cruel. Over 30,000 people had to leave their native places and accept the unhappy fate of emigrants. Free Bulgaria welcomed them with sympathy and provided them with shelter.

The glorious struggle of the participants in the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising was the serial eloquent example of patriotism and selflessness: a worthy example of self-sacrifice in the name of the Bulgarians' freedom and national unity for the future generations.

Photos of outstanding figures of the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization, the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Committee and participants in the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising: upper row: Georgi Kondolov, Tane Nikolov, Pito Gouli, Damyan Grouev, Lieutenant Boris Sarafov; lower row: Gotse Delchev, Mihail Gerdjikov, Atanas Babata, Nikola Karev, Major Anastas Lozanchev

The voivodes [leaders] at a conference, 1903

The symbols of oath



DECLARING OF BULGARIA'S INDEPENDENCE - 1908

Following the unfair decisions of Berlin Congress taken in the summer of 1878, in the course of thirty years, unlike its neighbours, Bulgaria was placed in a vassal position to the Ottoman Empire. This not only influenced negatively the national self-confidence and human dignity of the Bulgarian citizens but also the overall condition and development of the country's trade and economic relations. Last, but not least, Bulgaria's vassal position was in contrast with the nation's aspiration for liberation and unification of all Bulgarians. A possible international destabilization would have threatened the Union of Kingdom of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia and might have resulted in restoring the status quo prior to 1885. The vassal position did not allow the country to sign international agreements on an equal footing with its partners. In the diplomatic circles the Bulgarian representatives made several attempts to remove that dependence but no actual results were achieved.

Only the Government of Alexander Malinov set up in January 1908 set a goal to eliminate the dependence on Turkey. This became possible only in the summer of 1908. Based on Bulgaria's vassal position and the formalities of protocol, the Sublime Porte did not invite a Bulgarian diplomatic representative to a reception at the Grand Vizir in Constantinople which insulted the Bulgarian government and it recalled its diplomatic agent Ivan Geshov on September 1. A strike was staged at the Belovo-Svilengrad railway line (owned by Turkey) in the night of September 5 to 6. There was a crisis in Bulgarian-Turkish relations and the interests of many Western banks having invested in the railway were affected.

The Bulgarian Government was supported by Austria-Hungary which was trying to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina after the expiry of the 30-year period during which the latter was to be under the administration of the former, according to the Berlin Treaty. France also urged the Bulgarians to declare their country's independence. Russia was favourable towards a positive settlement of the issue with the Bulgarian independence but insisted that it was tied up with a review of the Berlin Treaty and achieving of benefits for itself in regards to the Bosphorus and Dardanelles.

While Prince Ferdinand, who was still in Vienna, continued to hesitate, the Government in Sofia accelerated the events and decided to declare Bulgaria's independence on September 20, 1908. The Cabinet's resolve

made the Prince return to the country as quickly as possible and assume his obligations as Head of State. On September 21 Austria-Hungary notified the Great Powers that it would annex Bosnia and Herzegovina. On September 22, 1908 in the old capital Turnovo, the Prince and the government declared in a solemn ceremony, as the occasion required, Bulgaria's independence before the public and the termination of the vassal dependence on the Ottoman Empire. This important state and political event illustrated the incumbents' intention to follow the historical tradition. Prince Ferdinand assumed the title of "king of Bulgarians" which meant that he had claims to rule and represent, at a favourable moment, the Bulgarians outside the country as well. Following the Turnovo event, relations between Bulgaria and Turkey strained extremely. Mobilization was declared and there was a danger of a war. On October 14 England, France and Russia, backed by Germany and Italy, handed a joint note to the Bulgarian Government insisting that the army was recalled and negotiations with Constantinople begin. A similar note was handed to Turkey.

Continuous negotiations began in which Bulgaria rejected the Turkish demands due to their excessively high price and impossibility to fulfill. Russia felt that its international prestige was undermined and proposed a financial agreement for all negotiating parties. On March 3, 1909 a Russian-Turkish protocol regulating the financial issues was signed and, soon after that, Bulgaria and Russia concluded an agreement on the floating of a loan by the Russian side. In the middle of April 1909 the Bulgarian and Turkish governments signed a final protocol between the two countries regulating disputable issues. In the following days, the Great Powers, by diplomatic notes, recognized the legitimacy of Bulgaria's independence.

The declaring of Bulgaria's independence is an event of lasting historic importance. The country became an equal and independent partner in international relations. It is important to know that, unlike the neighbouring countries, Bulgaria obtained its independence without resorting to military means but, rather in a civilized manner through clever diplomatic maneuvering, like a modern European state. The Government of the Democratic Party, headed by Alexander Malinov, takes undoubtedly the credit for that.



BULGARIA AND THE BALKAN WARS

Bulgaria's participation in the Balkan Wars (1912 - 1913 z.) constitutes one of the brightest and most heroic pages of the national history. It was a supreme effort, expression the National Revival activists' message for freedom of all Bulgarians and their unification in a single state after the decision of the Berlin Congress (1878). The failure of the Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising in 1903 pushed Bulgaria towards the war as means for settlement of the national question. The Bulgarian governments had been preparing that war for over 25 years. However, no matter what the size of the funds allocated for re-armament were, it was clear for the Bulgarian diplomacy that, without the help of its neighbours, it had no chance to succeed against the Ottoman Empire. The military and political realities in the region prompted the conclusion of an alliance among Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro. This ensured superiority over the Ottoman Empire, which was still strong in military terms. The allies had no common strategic action plan but had mutual agreements on the direction of the military actions. For a little over a week, Bulgaria, having a population of 4.4 million people summoned 600,000 people under the colours. The Macedonian-Adrianople Volunteer Force exceeded 14,000. The armed forces were organized in three armies, one cavalry division, one cavalry brigade of all arms and separate detachments.

The war between Bulgaria and Turkey began on October 5, 1912. Second Army headed for the Adrianople Fortress and the main forces of First and Third Army towards Lozengrad and Hasikyoi. Severe battles were led in the region of Geckeneli, Seliolu, Eskipolos and Petra. Employing irresistible night attacks and bayonet charges the brave Bulgarian land troops made the enemy run away. Considerable amount of weapons were left over on the battle field. The two Bulgarian detachments, advancing in the Rhodope Mountain, in cooperation with the Cavalry Brigade of all arms succeeded in besieging and destroying the corps of Yaver Pasha at the village of Merhamli. 152 officers, 8,879 soldiers, 8 mountain arms, 2 machine-guns and 2000 horses were taken into captivity. The distressed pasha confessed: "The fastness of movement and attack was remarkable. This was a hurricane." The extended Seventh Rila Division advanced along the valley of the Strouma River and with the help of the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization liberated the Pirin Region. The ally forces, Serbs, Greek and Montenegrins, also achieved considerable success in Vardar and Aegean Macedonia, Epirus, Thessalia and Northern Albania they did not encounter serious opposition on the part of the Turkish garrisons. However, for the Bulgarians the war continued with a series of bloody battles in the late autumn of 1912 and the winter of 1912-1913. The Bulgarian army reached Chataldja, Gallipoli and Sharkoy.

When First and Third Army reached Chataldja, the Turkish fleet was assigned the task of attacking the Bulgarian one, which took a defence position. On

November 8, 1912 the torpedo boat "Druzki" attacked Turkish capital ship "Hamidie". The fledgling Bulgarian military aviation also had contribution to the war for national unification. It performed brave intelligence and combat flights and its unexpected actions caused panic among the Ottoman army at the Thrace front.

Undoubtedly, the seizure of the Adrianople fortress was the biggest achievement and triumph of the Bulgarian military art. According to many experts of the time, it was considered difficult to capture. The Bulgarian soldiers assaulted and seized the fortress, being the best fortified in the Balkans, in three days. Shukri Pasha, taken in captivity, gave his sword to Second Army Commander Lieutenant General Nikola Ivanov saying: "The Bulgarians' bravery is unmatched" No fortress can resist your army" At Adrianople the Bulgarian army employed for the first time the radio to counter the enemy, causing distress and confusion of its attempts of coordination. The war ended on May 17, 1913 with the signing of a peace treaty between Turkey and the Balkan allies. The Pirin Region, parts of the Rhodopes and Strandja were liberated. Of all allies the death toll was highest for the Bulgarians. As in the 1876 April Uprising, the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War, the Union (1885) and the defence in the Serb-Bulgarian War (1885) and the heroic Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising (1903), in the 1912-1913 Balkan War, the Bulgarian soldier proved a worthy successor of his forefathers, an ardent patriot, ready to sacrifice his life in the name of the ideal for liberation and unification of all Bulgarians.

Due to mistakes in diplomacy after the First Balkan War, the rivalry among the allies strengthened and the neighbours' nationalism grew into chauvinism, targeted at the lands densely populated with Bulgarians. The governments of Serbia and Greece having occupied 9/10 of Macedonia and Thrace concluded a secret treaty for joint fight against Bulgaria. Romania had claims towards Southern Dobroudja and thus Bulgaria found itself in a circle of hostile countries. On June 16, 1913 King Ferdinand ordered the Bulgarian Army to begin military actions against the disloyal allies Serbia and Greece. They were joined by Romania, which, on June 28 freely invaded Northern Bulgaria reaching the Sofia Plain. Recent oppressor Turkey also took advantage of Bulgaria's complex position and on June 30 it violated the Midia-Enos line, set under the London Treaty, and re-conquered Thrace.

The civil Bulgarian population remained helpless and was subjected to destruction and chased away from its native lands. Over 250,000 refugees from Thrace, Macedonia and Dobroudja came to Bulgaria.

Thus, due to the shortsightedness of the incumbents, Bulgarian experienced its First National Catastrophe, Even in these tough days, surrounded by hostile forces, the Bulgarian soldiers would defend their homeland by the very end and would not allow their invasion within the country's earlier borders.

"Bayonet Charge", Jaroslaw Vesin (NMMH)

Sword of a Bulgarian Navy officer

Portrait of Major General Georgi Vazov, Chief of the Eastern Sector at Adrianople

Mannlicher rifle, M. 1888, 8 mm calibre

Mannlicher carbine, M. 1888, 8 mm calibre

Sword of Major General Vulko Velchev, Commander of 11th Infantry Division

Smith & Wesson revolver, M. 1869. 10.67 mm calibre



MEMORY

In order to achieve progress in its development, every prospering modern nation should remember its past, cherish its culture and historical memory.

The Bulgarian people have an interesting and remarkable history. Our historical past is a part of the all-European development and cultural heritage, part of Europe's history. The more sincerely we respect our national memory, the worthier European citizens we would be.

The historical memory is a sign of culture of long standing. It is the hope of every suffering nation. Let's remember monk Paissii! Owing to the historical memory he wrote his remarkable "Slav-Bulgarian History: and the Bulgarian people have always had patriots and heroes with whom it is proud today.

Memory is self-knowledge. It is a pledge of civil involvement and intolerance towards the disadvantages of our public and political life. Memory is an important part of our national dignity and sets a moral standard of the cultural development of modern Bulgaria. The love towards the Bulgarian, the intolerance and the fight against oppression, the heroes' selflessness in the name of freedom and independence are assets that are highly valuable for today's Bulgarian. Historical memory is their inexhaustible eternal source.

This is why we should respect heroes and historical memory and aspire towards being their worthy followers in our everyday life devoting our efforts for the development and progress of our homeland.

БЪЛГАРИЙО, ЗА ТЕБЕ ТЕ УМРЯХА,
ЕДНА БЕ ТИ ДОСТОЙНА ЗАРАД ТЯХ
И ТЕ ЗА ТЕБ ДОСТОЙНИ, МАЙКО, БЯХА!



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